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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION,

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THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN,

JANUARY 19, 1845,

By ALEXANDER YOUNG.

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DISCOURSE.

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GENESIS, XXXI. 41.

THUS HAVE I BEEN TWENTY YEARS IN THY HOUSE.

IT is exactly twenty years this day, since I was ordained pastor of this church, and set for the defence of the Gospel in this place. The transactions of that day, so big with lasting consequences to us all, are as fresh to my mind as though they had occurred but yesterday. The forms of the venerable men, whose hands were laid upon my head in the impressive act of consecration, of Porter, and Harris, and Tuckerman, rise up now distinctly before my mental vision, though they themselves are sleeping in their graves; and the accents of the solemn Charge, uttered by the lips of the eloquent Channing, are still ringing in my ears. These pews, these galleries, these aisles, are again peopled with the crowds that thronged them on that day. The young are here again, though twenty years have made sad havoc with the grace and beauty of their youthful forms. The middle-aged of that day I see now before me,

though their infirm steps, and furrowed cheeks, and gray locks, all tell plainly enough that twenty years have not passed over them without doing their slow and silent work. The aged of that day, I see here and there one; but most of them, alas! are gone. But the grave also this day gives up its dead — a vast multitude, of every age, which twenty successive years have taken away; and they all now appear before me, and take their wonted places here, and with bright eyes, and beaming faces, and interested looks, attend again to the solemn services of my Ordination, twenty years ago!

And twenty years has not passed without producing changes in the minister as well as in the congregation. At the time of my settlement, I was a young man, fresh from the schools, burning with the love of letters, eager to engage in the duties of my sacred calling, and to enter upon a life of activity and usefulness; but devoid of experience, and, like all young ministers, but poorly fitted by the secluded life of a College and the theoretical training of a Divinity School, to meet the varied calls of practical life, and the unintermitted and perplexing requisitions of a city parish. After the lapse of twenty years, I feel that I am young no longer; that I have not now that apology for my deficiencies; that if I am inexperienced still, it is not for want of sufficient time and opportunity; that if I am not now fully competent to discharge efficiently the duties of my

sacred office, upon myself alone must rest the blame and the reproach.

Brethren, I propose to look back this day through the vista of twenty years, and to take a rapid survey of my ministry. I invite you to review our connexion, which has subsisted during that long period of time. Long I may well call it; in these days of restlessness and change, twenty years is a long ministry. It is a long ministry even in this quiet and favored parish. This church has existed now a hundred and thirty years; and of the eight pastors who have been settled over it, my ministry is the longest of all but one, and that the earliest, the venerable Checkley's, who preached on this Church Green[1] fifty years, from 1719 to 1769. I have officiated here four years longer than the honored and beloved Kirkland. I feel, brethren, that the best years of my life have

[1] "A petition was drawn and presented to the town of Boston, on Tuesday, the 20th day of September, 1715, and was as followeth:

"To the inhabitants of the town of Boston. The petition of sundry inhabitants at the southerly end of Boston, sheweth: That whereas we, the subscribers, have entered into a design, if we obtain leave, to erect a meeting-house for the public worship of God, at the south end of Boston, therefore desire a grant from this town, of that piece or parcel of land, called *Church Green*, in Summer street, for erecting a meeting-house of sixty-five feet long, and forty-five feet broad, it being a suitable place for that service, and by the situation and name thereof, intended no doubt by our forefathers for that purpose.

"At the aforesaid town meeting, the abovesaid petition was read, and voted thereon, and granted."—*MS. Records of the Church*, lib. i. fol. 2.

been spent in your service, at this altar; and that therefore I may be permitted to speak this day of my whole course of action and service here. You will the more readily indulge me in this review, when I remind you that it is the first time that I have done it, and that probably it will be the last. The egotism which I shall be compelled to use, will, I trust, be overlooked and pardoned, from the necessity of the case. I throw myself entirely upon your indulgence and forbearance; and I trust you will allow me to speak frankly and from a full heart. I would be among you and speak to you without fear, for I dwell among mine own people; and if anything should be inconsiderately uttered, you will attribute it, I hope, to the weakness of my judgment, not to the bad state of my heart.

I begin with my Preaching. This is the first, the prominent, the most important part of a minister's labors. His great work, the work of every Sabbath, a work which is ever impending, ever pursued, and never finished, is to preach the Gospel. In my opinion, everything else in a clergyman's duties is subordinate, and should be made subservient to this. Preaching is the great instrument, under God, for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. Pastoral visiting, the Sunday School, the private religious meeting, the Bible Class, the Vestry Lecture, are all very well in their way and in their place; and if wisely conducted

and carefully superintended by the minister of the parish, they may render good service to the cause of religion. But they are not to be named in comparison with the stated preaching of the Word from the pulpit, in the church, on the Lord's day.

But preaching, in order to be effective, must be the fruit of application, study, and thought. The sermon or two, required every week, make a constant drain on the minister's intellectual resources; and whilst he is thus continually drawing from the fountain, it will soon become empty, unless fresh streams of thought are perpetually flowing into the mind. Hence the need of close meditation and profound study. But this requires leisure and a sequestration from the world. If therefore you wish for the sermon on the Lord's day that will really instruct and benefit you, you must be willing to give your minister time to prepare it in, — time to be in his study, among his books, at his writing-desk, and not require him to fritter it away in visiting, and gossiping, and petty meetings, and a thousand other minor and less important affairs.

The tendency of the times, I am aware, is altogether in another direction. It was stated some time ago, on high authority, and in terms of commendation, that "the schoolmaster is abroad." Is it not to be feared that the minister, in these days of agitation, is *abroad*, when he ought to be at home, pondering the high themes of theology and

ethics, and qualifying himself, by earnest thought and intellectual discipline, to be an able and powerful preacher of the Word? The tendency of things, in our times, is to take the minister out of his study, and mix him up with all the exciting topics of the day, and leave him little or no time for reading and reflection. "Action! action!" is now the cry on every side. The minister is now expected to be present at every gathering of men or women, for every philanthropic and visionary purpose under the sun. He must speak and exhort everywhere and on all topics. He is not master of his own precious time. He is regarded as a sort of public property, and the community seem to think that they have a lien upon him to do up all the incidental and extra work which belongs to no one else in particular.

On my settlement in this place, twenty years ago, the conviction was deeply impressed upon my mind that it was far better to concentrate the thoughts on one thing, than to dissipate them among a thousand — that it was better, at least for me, with my views and feelings, with my tastes and habits of study, to spend the time, not demanded by recreation and health, in my library, in cultivating my mind and in preparing for the pulpit, rather than in holding a multiplicity of religious meetings, and so daily diluting the Word, which should be delivered out strong and concentrated from the sacred desk on the Sabbath. It was my conviction that at the present

day, in an intelligent community like this, the minister of religion, in order to be respected and useful, must be a thoroughly educated man — must be a theologian and a scholar, in order to be a preacher. In the infancy of New-England, it was her glory and her boast, that "every town and village within her borders had a scholar for its minister." It has hitherto been the proud distinction of the class of Christians to which we belong, that it has firmly maintained the necessity of a well-educated clergy; and the prevalence of our views among the more enlightened portion of the community is to be ascribed mainly to the intellectual power with which they have been set forth, and to the ability and learning which have always been found in the ranks of our religious teachers. My motto accordingly has been — Preaching first, and above all things; and, as indispensable to it, retirement and study. Though I have not shrunk from answering every reasonable call upon my time, and acceding to every reasonable request to promote important and judicious plans of benevolence and reform, I have thought that my studies ought not to be interrupted by any of these extraneous demands upon my attention. I have felt that my first duty was to my own people; that they had a right to my best services; and that my great work was the weekly preparation for the pulpit. On this conviction, I have acted — whether wisely or not, you will judge. At least, I

can say that I have acted honestly and conscientiously. The experience of twenty years has not changed my conviction; and were I to commence my ministry anew, I should pursue precisely the same course.

And now in regard to the character of my preaching. I have aimed to have it strictly Scriptural and Evangelical. I have resorted to no church standard, to ascertain what the religion was that I should preach. I have consulted no creed or body of divinity, to determine what were the doctrines that I should inculcate. But I have gone at once to the Bible, to the New Testament, to the words of Jesus and his Apostles. Whatever I have found there, I have imparted to you; and wherever the Scriptures have been silent, I have been silent too. No one, I think, will accuse me of having concealed my sentiments, or of having endeavoured to becloud the minds of my hearers in regard to the doctrines of religion. I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, nor shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. I have aimed to preach the pure, unadulterated Gospel, the simple truth as it is in Jesus. I have not preached human philosophy nor scholastic theology, but the authoritative declarations of the Son of God. I have not preached Socrates or Plato, Augustine or Calvin, Socinus or Priestley; no, nor even Paul or Apollos; "for who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom

we believe?" I have preached Christ, and Christ alone, — the foundation, the corner-stone, the beginning and the end of the revelations of God. I have preached the Gospel on his authority; not simply because it is reasonable, or wise, or beautiful, but because he revealed it in the name and with the sanctions of the Most High. I have preached it not as an intellectual or æsthetical exercise, but as a moral and spiritual verity, the power of God unto salvation. I have preached Christ; not merely his name and offices, but his truth, his spirit, his life. I have preached Christ, without reference to the dogmas or formularies of any sect. I have studied the Gospel for myself, interpreted the New Testament for myself, and called no man master.

I have said nothing to you, brethren, about the Trinity; because I could not find that word, nor the doctrine of three equal divine persons, in the Bible. I have preached the supremacy of the Father, and the derivation and dependence of the Son; thinking that Jesus meant to be understood and believed, when he declared, "My Father is greater than I. I do nothing of myself. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, and the Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works;" and thinking, too, that the doctrine of two natures in Christ is a mere theological subterfuge to evade the force of such passages as I have just quoted, and, what is worse than all, is a virtual, though of course an un-

intentional imputation upon our Lord's sincerity and veracity. I have preached the true Divinity of Christ; understanding thereby not his equality with God, but his supernatural origin, and his heaven-derived mission and ministry. I have preached the true doctrine of the Holy Spirit; not regarding it as a person, but as an influence from the Father, poured out in answer to prayer upon every one that asketh for it. I have preached the Depravity of man; not his innate depravity, nor his original sin, derived and transmitted from Adam, but his voluntary transgression, his personal iniquity, involving guilt, and entailing remorse, and demanding repentance, conversion, reformation. I have preached the Scripture doctrine of the Atonement; not the doctrine of an angry and implacable God, incapable of forgiveness, insisting upon the full penalty of sin, and inflicting its whole weight upon his unoffending Son, as a substitute for the guilty world, and thus satisfying his unrelenting justice by the sacrifice of the innocent — but the Evangelical doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of Reconciliation, whereby God is willing freely to forgive the sinner simply upon repentance, not imputing to him his trespasses any longer, but blotting them all out, and washing them all away — a doctrine which is so fully and beautifully illustrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son. That parable contains the true doctrine of the Atonement — forgiveness and reconciliation upon

repentance. I have preached the doctrine of Retribution; not the doctrine of hell-fire, and bodily torments, and everlasting damnation; not the doctrine of a bottomless, impassable gulf, fixed between the two great classes of saints and sinners, the elect and the reprobate, in a future life, — but the doctrine of a righteous and impartial retribution, in which the peculiar circumstances, trials and temptations of each individual will be taken into the account; and the result of all will be, that in the world to come, there will be an infinite variety of condition and degrees of happiness, each one being happy there in exact proportion to his capacity for happiness, arising from the moral and spiritual state of his soul.

These doctrines I have preached, because I believed them to be true, rational and Scriptural. I still hold them to be so, and were I to commence my ministry again, I could preach no other doctrines, without doing violence to my understanding and conscience. Every year of Scriptural study and theological investigation has served to confirm me in the truth of these sentiments. They seem to me the only views worthy of God, of his character and moral government.

You will bear me witness, however, brethren, that I have preached no extreme doctrine, and have never urged my views of religion with dogmatism and bigotry. In fact, my doctrine has all along

been implied rather than expressed in my discourses. I have taken it for granted, as undisputed and indisputable, and have preached as though you all believed it, and it could not be otherwise. The doctrines of religion have always seemed to me like the foundations of a building, essential indeed to its stability, but not requiring to be prominent or visible. If they are only once laid, firm and strong, they may as well be kept out of sight, and the superstructure be raised above ground, in its just proportions of grace and harmony.

My preaching, accordingly, has been practical and devotional, rather than speculative or controversial. I have addressed the heart more than the intellect, and have endeavoured to influence your characters and conduct, rather than to make your creed correct and orthodox. I have tried to make you good Christians, rather than subtile and expert theologians. My preaching has had a good deal to do with the common virtues, the daily duties, and the besetting sins and temptations of the world. I have reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come. With the Apostles of our Lord, I have believed that "he that doeth righteousness is righteous;" that "love is greater than faith;" that "faith without works is dead;" and therefore I have "affirmed constantly that they who believe in God, should be careful to maintain good works." I trust, however, that it has not been a

dry, dead, worldly morality, which I have inculcated, but a heavenly virtue, a divine temper, a spiritual life, proceeding from the heart, and sanctifying the inward as well as the outward man.

I need not tell you, my friends, that this kind of preaching, this practical, moral, spiritual preaching, is the hardest kind of preaching for the minister as well as for the people. It certainly is not easy for the people either to hear or to practise. It is not "smooth preaching" to them. It lays no flattering unction to their souls, and laps them in no oblivion of their sins; but tells them plainly what they "must *do* to be saved." Nor is it any easier for the minister. It is easy to preach from a creed, or a catechism, or a system of divinity. It is easy enough to preach the Athanasian Creed, the five points of Calvinism, or the Thirty-nine Articles. It requires no study, thought, or preparation, to do that. But to take any one of the Christian duties — to state and define it, to fix its limits and qualifications, to point out its bearings and applications, to set forth the motives and considerations in favor of its observance, and remove the objections and obstacles that lie in its way — in short, to present it in its completeness, without exaggeration and without omission, and press it home upon the conscience and the heart, — this is no slight or easy task. When therefore a minister adopts and pursues this course of preaching for a series of years, you may

be sure that he does not do it with a view to relieve himself from his work, or to lighten the load of his labors.

My preaching I have endeavoured to make serious, impressive, and edifying. I have aimed particularly that it should be solid and instructive, and contain good sense at least, if nothing else. I think I can say, brethren, that you have had very little *fancy* preaching from me — very little of what is called flowery, figurative, pretty preaching — preaching for the mere sake of making a noise, and attracting attention, and drawing a crowd to the church. I have never tried, I have never desired, to be a *popular* or *fashionable* preacher. Since I have been settled here, there have been many such in this city — for our citizens, like the Athenians of old, are fond of novelties and paradoxes, and will flock to listen to the newest phase of Calvinism or the latest form of Transcendentalism, it matters not which, provided the preacher has a plausible address and a pleasant voice. These popular preachers have had their little day of triumph and renown, and then been neglected and forgotten, for some new comer, some later favorite. They were, for a time, the town's talk, and the idols of the people; but when, after a while, the people got tired of them, like the iconoclasts of old, they smote them in their wrath, hurled them from their pedestals, and broke them in pieces. Hardly a year has

passed since my Ordination without producing a meteor of this sort — a shooting and a falling star. Better guide for earth's benighted traveller is the twinkling light of the small, fixed star, shining steadily and calmly in its appointed place in the firmament, than the whirling fire-ball, flashing for an instant upon his path, and then leaving him again enveloped in darkness and gloom. — It is a subject of deep satisfaction to me, in the review of my ministry, that I have had no notoriety of this kind, and have been saved from the poor, small ambition of seeking it. In fact, I have never been very solicitous to be known beyond the bounds of my own parish. To be useful and acceptable among you, my brethren, has been my highest aim. Your approbation has been a sufficient reward for all my efforts, and to be appreciated and esteemed at home, by my own people, has been quite enough for my moderate ambition. I have always had under my charge a larger congregation than any single minister can well attend to, and my labors in every department have left me no time to look abroad for fame and reputation.

Before closing what I have to say about my preaching, let me state the position which I have taken and firmly occupied in respect to what have been called the exciting topics, the agitating questions of the day, particularly intemperance and slavery. I have had my own distinct and decided

views of those great social evils, and of the movements and measures that have been adopted to suppress and abolish them; and on all suitable occasions I have not scrupled to express those views, in the pulpit and elsewhere. I have always felt myself at perfect liberty to speak to you here on these as on other subjects; and, for one, I repel the calumny that the Boston pulpit is gagged by the people. My sympathies have always been with those who have combined to relieve humanity from these its two most appalling evils. But I must confess that I have often seen reason to lament their extreme and violent measures; and their denunciatory spirit and ribald abuse of better men than themselves have served to repel me from concerted action with them. When I have seen some of the frenzied advocates of total abstinence banishing the wine-cup from the Lord's table, and virtually censuring the Saviour for his first miracle which he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and when I have heard the frantic leaders of the Abolitionists denouncing the Church and calumniating its ministers, I have involuntarily exclaimed, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united."

I reflected, too, that I was ordained to perform a specific work here, a work demanding all my time, and thoughts, and energies, — that I was set to till and dress this part of the Lord's vineyard — to

watch over these immortal souls — not to rescue them from the dominion of some single vice, but to present every one of them perfect in Christ — not to lop off some of the branches of the tree of sin, but to fell its trunk and dig up its roots. This, it seemed to me, was a greater and more arduous work than even the suppression of intemperance or the abolition of slavery. At least it was the work to which I had been consecrated and pledged; and the preaching of the Gospel, as I conceived, included these as well as all other topics of Christian morals.

And then in regard to the new views in religion and the new measures of social reform that have been started during the last few years in this city and its neighbourhood, I must admit that I have never belonged to what has been modestly called by its leaders the *movement* party, or the party of *progress*. By temperament, by education, by principle, I have been a conservative; and though not blind to the existing evils in society, nor wedded to its abuses, nor indifferent to the alleged errors and corruptions in the Church, I acknowledge that I have not wished for such changes as those reformers would bring us. I have not chosen to unite myself to any party that, in its boasted movement and progress, was stealthily advancing towards the confines of anarchy, irreligion, and unbelief. I have preferred to bear for years the stigma of belonging to

the *stationary* party, of being fast anchored to the past, rather than launch, without rudder, chart, or compass, on the untried sea of ungodly speculation and quixotic enterprise.

As to the latest form of infidelity that has appeared among us, I early avowed my utter abhorrence of its speculations, and declared my determined hostility. I believe that I was among the first to speak out and take a decided stand against it. My views on the subject, delivered five years ago from this pulpit, in a defence of Historical Christianity, are in print; and what was then declared by some of my more prudent or timid brethren to be a premature alarm and an injudicious assault, is now seen, from the bold and unblushing front which that movement now wears, and the sympathy and countenance which it finds in certain quarters, not to have been any too early, or any too severe. When attempts are made to undermine the foundations of the Gospel, I cannot stop to pick out soft words, nor will I wait till the mine is sprung.

In regard to my pastoral duties, brethren, I believe you will bear me witness that I have never omitted nor neglected them, but have discharged them faithfully and fully, especially in seasons of sickness, bereavement, and affliction. Ye know from the first day that I came, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, and how I have taught you publicly, and from house to house. In justice

to myself, let me here say, that however much I may have respected certain persons in the congregation, or however much I may have been indebted to their kindness, I have never been under the influence of any coterie, family or individual here, although this may at times have been suspected or intimated. I have never bowed down to wealth or fashion. I have never flattered them; I have never courted their favors. I appeal to you, brethren, if I have. Whilst I have not been willing to join in the senseless outcry against the wealthy and more prosperous classes, I have recognized no distinction of this sort among my parishioners. I have visited all indiscriminately, if not equally. If there has been a difference or a preference, it has been in favor of the indigent, the lowly, the obscure. If I have visited the poor oftener than the rich, it is because — as is very natural — I have met in their dwellings a warmer welcome, a heartier reception, a more entire sympathy and confidence, and a greater readiness to receive religious counsel and exhortation, which should be the prominent object of pastoral visiting. The minister's visit to the poor man's family is of far more consequence to him than it can possibly be to the rich man, and of course is more earnestly desired, and more highly valued. The rich man has his troops of friends and fashionable visiters. He has all sorts of resources and appliances to make life comfortable, and time pass away

agreeably. He has his luxurious saloons and his gorgeous furniture, his splendid library, his cabinet of curiosities, and his costly collection of the works of art, in painting, and engraving, and statuary. Not so with the poor man. His friends are few, his house often unfurnished and comfortless, his intellectual resources limited, his means of improvement and entertainment scanty. To him the pastor's call is an era in the year's history, an occurrence to be noted, an event anxiously expected, joyfully received, and gratefully remembered. I have seen the widow's heart leap for joy when I have crossed her threshold; and when I have sat down by her fireside, and read a chapter from her Bible, or a hymn from her psalm-book, — which her dim and failing sight would not permit her to read — she has given me a blessing which has stirred my soul, and sent me on my way rejoicing. Surely, then, the rich will not object to the more frequent visits which the pastor pays to the dwellings of the poor, though they may well envy him the happiness which, on such errands of love, he receives and imparts.

Here let me speak of our Sunday School, which was established October 12th, 1834, and from that day to this has pursued the steady and noiseless tenor of its way, seen and felt only in the good which it has accomplished. We have been favored, from its commencement, with a body of intelligent, devoted,

and united teachers; and I gladly avail myself of the present opportunity to thank them for the valuable aid which they have rendered me in this part of my duty, in watching over the religious instruction of the children of the parish. The School has been singularly favored, too, by a succession of superintendents, admirably qualified for the place by their education and previous training,—young men who were preparing themselves for the ministry, which they afterwards entered and adorned. Of these, six were sons of this parish, reared under my own eye, and objects of my pride and love. Four of them are now living, and in the ministry, whilst two, alas! have gone down to an early grave, followed by many regrets and tears. The long day of their mourning is not yet ended.[1]

[1] They were all graduates of Harvard College, in Cambridge. Of the living are the Rev. George E. Ellis, pastor of the Harvard Church, in Charlestown; the Rev. Henry W. Bellows, pastor of the First Congregational Church in the city of New York; the Rev. Theodore H. Dorr, late pastor of the First Congregational Church in Billerica; and the Rev. Rufus Ellis, pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Northampton. The deceased were the Rev. William V. Thacher, pastor of the Unitarian Church, in Savannah, Georgia, who died July 16, 1839, on his voyage to New York, aged 24; and Charles Hayward, Jr., a young man of rare gifts and great promise, who had just commenced the study of Divinity, and died November 5, 1838, aged 21. Of each of them I can truly say,

"Quis desiderio sit pudor, aut modus
Tam cari capitis?
Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit;
Nulli flebilior quam mihi."

Among the minor changes which have been adopted here since my settlement, let me mention the substitution of Dr. Greenwood's Collection of Psalms and Hymns in the place of Dr. Belknap's, which was effected on the 2d of April, 1837 ; and the introduction of a new and splendid Organ, procured by the generous subscriptions of individuals in the parish, which was opened on the 13th of October, 1844. Long may your hearts be cheered and your devotions elevated by its solemn and inspiring sounds!

In the beginning of this Discourse, I alluded to the changes which had taken place in the congregation since my settlement. They have been great and mournful indeed. Hardly a family here has been exempt from bereavement ; and some whole families have been swept away, not an individual surviving. Brethren, how many that were the objects of our mutual esteem and love, have been removed from us within twenty years! I look around the church, and seek in vain for those features which formerly saluted me with the cheering smile of a benignant sympathy. The bereaved husband, the disconsolate widow, the fatherless or motherless children sit alone in the desolate pew ; and strange forms and new faces everywhere meet my eye. Of the hundred and sixty-one families belonging to the parish at the time of my Ordination, portions of only fifty-nine remain, and a hundred and ten heads of

families, sixty-one males and forty-nine females, have, since then, been numbered with the dead. In the course of twenty years I have attended three hundred and thirty-seven funerals,[1] united a hundred and eighty-one couples in marriage, administered the ordinance of baptism two hundred and eighty-four times, and admitted a hundred and forty to the Lord's table — besides ten others, who stand propounded for admission at our next communion.

During the same period, the population of our city has more than doubled its numbers. Twenty years ago there were but thirty-six churches and chapels in the city; there are now eighty. Of the thirty-five ministers that then officiated in those places of worship, I am one of eleven that remain in their parishes; and twelve are dead. There are now eighty-three clergymen officiating in the city.[2]

I cannot close this Discourse, long as it has been, without thanking you, my people, for the affection you have manifested, and the uniform kindness with which you have treated me during the twenty years I have been your pastor. You bore patiently with the inexperience and crudities of my early ministry.

[1] Of these, six were of persons over ninety years of age; sixteen between eighty and ninety; twenty-nine between seventy and eighty; and twenty-nine between sixty and seventy; making eighty deceased over sixty years — eighty out of three hundred and thirty-seven, nearly one fourth — a very remarkable longevity.

[2] See the Massachusetts Register for 1825 and 1845.

You have charitably overlooked my many deficiencies, and been lenient to my weaknesses and errors. I rejoice that no root of bitterness has sprung up to trouble us, and that my ministry among you has been so peaceful and happy. I acknowledge with devout gratitude, that the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, in my native city, among my kindred and the friends of my youth, in this delightful part of the Lord's vineyard. In this "paradise of clergymen," as Boston has been justly called, my lot has been a singularly fortunate and favored one. I was called, by your unanimous voice, to stand in a place rendered illustrious by the wise and good men who had successively occupied it. And though I am well aware that my position has, on that very account, been the more arduous and trying, I have been willing to bear it all for the sake of the manifold advantages and privileges connected with it. I have been called to preach here, from Sabbath to Sabbath, to an enlightened and refined congregation, capable of appreciating the highest efforts of the pulpit. I know of no more honorable or desirable station, in the Church or in the State, than this. I seek for no higher. I ask for no better. I can conceive of no wider sphere of influence and usefulness.

In the retrospect of these twenty years there is much that is sad, and much, too, that is cheering. I cannot look back without a deep feeling of regret

that I have not been able to accomplish more whilst I have been with you, that I have not witnessed greater results of my labors, and that I have not been able to repay you for all that you have done for me and mine. Be assured, my friends, that it is all indelibly impressed on my heart, and will remain there whilst life lasts. There are some here whose sympathy and affectionate regards have been constant and unfailing. Without them, I should long ago have sunk under my burden, or abandoned my place. May God reward and bless them!

Brethren, we have had many changes in this Society within little more than a year past, and they may seem to be against us. Some of us, perhaps, may have been disheartened by these sudden and frequent instances of mortality.[1] At times it has seemed to me, that I was dwelling among the tombs, and was daily treading on the graves of my parishioners. When I have gone to administer consolation to you in your bereavements, I have often felt that I needed rather to receive it from you, and stood in need of all your sympathy and support. But let us not doubt the providence of God, nor distrust his goodness. Let us have faith in Him, in

[1] The deaths alluded to were as follows: December 18, 1843, Samuel P. Gardner, 76; December 20, John Randall, M. D., 67; December 22, Joshua Blake, 65; February 2, 1844, Israel Munson, 77; December 8, William Prescott, LL.D., 82; December 18, Samuel Dorr, 70; December 30, John Waters, 70; January 4, 1845, Benjamin Russell, 83.

his benignity as well as his power. He never will forsake his Church. Though the fathers are taken away, and the elders fail from among us, we will believe that God will raise up a generation worthy to follow them, and to take their places in society and in the Church. We know that he is able of the very stones to raise up children to Abraham. How can we doubt that he is able to raise up disciples to Christ?

Let us remember, brethren, that by the removal of so many aged members of the parish, a weightier obligation is laid upon the middle-aged and the young to uphold the ark of God, and to sustain the institutions of religion in this place. I call upon you, affectionately and solemnly, to do so. I call upon you to coöperate with your minister in all his measures to advance the spiritual and temporal welfare of this church. Give him, more than ever, your sympathy, your countenance, your confidence. As good and faithful parishioners, encourage his heart and strengthen his hands by heartily concurring with him in every good work that he proposes or approves. Your fathers have transmitted to you the institutions of religion as their most precious legacy. Fail not to value and uphold and cherish them. Reverence the Sabbath, and the sanctuary, and the ordinances of the Gospel, and forsake not the assembling of yourselves together on the Lord's day, as the manner of some is. Take the places of

your fathers and brethren in the church where they so long worshipped, and endeavour to fill them faithfully and worthily. Say with the affectionate and pious Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee."

Brethren, bear with me yet a moment longer, and suffer the word of exhortation. We have been together here twenty years. We have enjoyed, for that long space of time, Sabbath privileges and Gospel blessings. How have we used them? Are we now what we ought to be? How much better are we than we were twenty years ago? Are we any better? Or are we worse, and growing worse? These are solemn and searching questions. They should be carefully considered, and conscientiously answered.

Who of us will be here twenty years hence? God only knows. The aged certainly cannot be here then; nor many of the middle-aged; and of the young, no one can tell who will be taken and who will be left. Twenty years, so long to look forward to, are, as we have seen, nothing in the retrospect; and before we are aware of it, they will

have passed away, and we shall have passed away with them.

But let us not spend our time in fruitless regrets for the past, nor in vain forebodings about the future. Let us be up and doing. Let us improve the present, whilst it is ours. Let us endeavour to atone for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges by renewed zeal and more earnest efforts. Let us heed the monitory voice that speaks to us from the grave of departed years and buried joys. Let us attend to the claims of religion. Let us strive to do all our duty, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; remembering that the time is short, and that we know not the day nor the hour of our departure.

And now, brethren, farewell. The Lord God Almighty bless, preserve, and keep you. The Lord mercifully with his favor, look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace. The God of our fathers be with us in time to come, as he has been in time past. Let him not leave us, nor forsake us!

APPENDIX.

On the marble monument erected in the Unitarian Church, in Savannah, by the bereaved flock, to the memory of their lamented pastor, is the following inscription, written by the author of the preceding Discourse.

IN MEMORY OF
REV. WILLIAM VINCENT THACHER,
PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH.

A MODEST AND HUMBLE CHRISTIAN.
THE PRINCIPLES AND PRECEPTS OF HIS MASTER,
WHICH HE INCULCATED FROM THE PULPIT,
HE EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS OWN CHARACTER,
AND ILLUSTRATED BY A CONSISTENT LIFE.
OF GENTLE MANNERS AND WARM AFFECTIONS,
HE WON MANY SOULS TO CHRIST
BY HIS MILD AND PATHETIC ELOQUENCE.
THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE RESISTED A BOLDER APPEAL,
YIELDED TO HIS CALM AND QUIET TEACHING,
ACKNOWLEDGING THE POWER OF SINCERE PIETY,
AND THE CHARM OF SIMPLE GOODNESS.

HE WAS BORN IN BOSTON, APRIL 15, 1815,
AND DIED ON HIS PASSAGE FROM SAVANNAH TO NEW YORK,
JULY 16, 1839.

An extract from the Discourse delivered in the Church on Church Green, the Sunday after the news of Mr. Thacher's death reached Boston, fills a column in the Christian Register for August 10, 1839, vol. xviii. page 134. Its length forbids its insertion here.

CHARLES HAYWARD, JR.

Extract from a Discourse delivered in the Church on Church Green, November 11, 1838, the Sunday after his decease.

"Our young friend was possessed of uncommon intellectual powers, which were very early developed and ripened. This was always admitted by those who had the best opportunities of observing and testing his capacities and gifts — I mean his classmates and fellow-students at the University. The production of a regular drama, at the age of nineteen, which successfully passed the ordeal of public criticism, is no ordinary proof of the precocity and maturity of his genius; whilst his Life of Sebastian Cabot, which appeared in the ninth volume of Mr. Sparks's American Biography, would be thought highly creditable to any young man among us.

"On leaving College, a year since, with distinguished honors, having passed unscathed through that fiery trial of principle and character, and having been selected by his classmates as their Orator, he entered upon the study of the Law. But he found, after a while, that this study was not congenial to his views and feelings, that he could not get interested in it, that he could not pursue it conscientiously. His mind was revolving higher themes — his heart was bent on a holier service; and accordingly, at the close of the academic year, he returned, with a glad and happy spirit, to his earlier choice; and entering the Divinity School at Cambridge, devoted himself, with his whole soul, to a preparation for the Christian ministry.

"Though his decease, at such an early age, and with such bright prospects before him, may appear to us untimely and mysterious, yet it was evidently his own feeling, more than once expressed, that 'it was best to die young;' and a short time before he died, he told one whom he dearly loved, that when he was gone she must not mourn for him. As is not unfrequently the case, he seems to have had a mysterious presentiment, that he was not to stay here long; and this impression may, perhaps, have given new stimulus to his efforts, and kindled up within him that earnest and fervent desire to be useful during the brief space that he was to remain. He thus 'fulfilled a long time in a short time.' An inward zeal seemed to consume him, and the spirit wore away the body, as the sword-blade cuts the scabbard. He lived not to himself; he died not to himself."